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5. FIRST SIGHT RECORD OF ASIATIC IBEX *CAPRA IBEX SIBRICA* FROM KUGTI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, CHAMBA, HIMACHAL PRADESH, INDIA

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Snow Leopard survey was conducted in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh by WWF-India in 2008. Kugti Wildlife Sanctuary (KWLS) was one of the study areas for collecting the information on direct and indirect evidences of Snow Leopard, co-predators and their prey. KWLS is situated in the Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh, India. It represents the Biogeographic zone-2A of North-West Himalayas (Rodgers and Panwar 1988). On November 14, 2008, while surveying from Duggi to Relang and scanning surrounding mountains for evidence of wildlife, an Asiatic Ibex *Capra ibex sibirica* was sighted at location 32° 39' 55.1" N and 76° 46' 39.5" E. It was a group of five individuals, of which two males could be identified. The animals' identity was ascertained from the pointed beard, and shape of horns that were thick scimitar-shaped (Prater 1998; Menon 2003). The sex of the remaining animals could not be determined due to long distance (about 100 m) and low visibility.

They appeared for about three to four minutes and went to the other side of the hill. The group of Ibex was sighted at an elevation of 3,700 m at the southern aspect. These were at 50° slope and in a shrubland. The vegetation consisted of grass (40%) and shrub (60%). This was the first sighting of Asiatic Ibex in the KWLS. Only indirect evidences were recorded so far (G.S. Rawat and S. Sathyakumar pers.

comm.). Apart from Asiatic Ibex *Capra ibex*, Brown Bear *Ursus arctos*, Goral *Nemorhaedus goral* and Monal Pheasant *Lophophorus impejanus* were also sighted during the survey.

The Asiatic Ibex is a wild goat, and male can easily be identified by the thick scimitar-shaped horns and pointed beard. Female can be identified by the smaller size and thin parallel horns. The coat is dark brown with dull white saddle patches. It is distributed in the mountain ranges (3,650 m to 6,700 m) of western Himalayas, i.e., west of Sutlej in Himachal Pradesh and western Ladakh (Menon 2003). It prefers steep slopes and in the spring they are found low below the snow-line, attracted by the new sprouting grass where they usually graze early in the morning and evening.

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